THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301-1200

HEALTH AFFAIRS

OCT 6 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR SURGEON GENERAL OF THE ARMY
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE NAVY
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Reactions to the Anthrax Vaccine

I was among the several DoD witnesses this week at the House Government Reform Committee hearing, which included several individuals, most of them active duty, alleging harm from anthrax vaccinations. All of their case histories are complex and moving. Some statements were made, however, that reflect on the quality of care and empathy of our providers. The testimony is available for your staff review. I request that you reinforce to our medical personnel that some individuals will have reactions to anthrax vaccine, some mild, some more pronounced. In every case, we should treat them with the same empathy as, for example, an injury. They deserve a careful workup and prompt treatment of symptoms.

Some of the witnesses at that the hearing indicated that they had to personally pay for part of their current medications. COL Gaston Randolph, Director, Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program (AVIP) Agency, and his staff are checking on the details of each of these cases and may be in touch with your staff about needed interventions and remedies for this issue.

There was one instance of an individual who wanted to submit a Vaccine Adverse Event Report System (VAERS) report but was stopped by medical personnel. That should not happen. Submissions of VAERS reports should be encouraged by providers who believe it is warranted and any patient who believes that they have had an unusual or severe reaction.

A message to your medical personnel is the best way to reinforce your expectations for the highest quality, empathetic medical care for vaccinees and, indeed, all patients. I request that you do so and include a reminder about the VAERS issue to reinforce the importance of this critical surveillance activity.

Should your staff have any questions about the details of the hearings, or AVIP policies and procedures, please have them contact COL Randolph.

J. Jarrett Clinton, MD, MPH
Acting Assistant Secretary